

**IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT  
FOR THE EASTERN DISTRICT OF TEXAS  
TYLER DIVISION**

**THE DAILY WIRE, LLC;**

**FDRLST MEDIA, LLC; and**

**THE STATE OF TEXAS, by and through its  
Attorney General, Ken Paxton,**

*Plaintiffs,*

**v.**

**DEPARTMENT OF STATE;**

**GLOBAL ENGAGEMENT CENTER;**

**ANTONY BLINKEN, in his official capacity as  
Secretary of State;**

**LEAH BRAY, in her official capacity as Deputy  
Coordinator of the State Department's Global  
Engagement Center;**

**JAMES P. RUBIN, in his official capacity as  
Coordinator for the Global Engagement Center of the  
State Department;**

**DANIEL KIMMAGE, in his official capacity as the  
Principal Deputy Coordinator for the Global  
Engagement Center at the State Department;**

**ALEXIS FRISBIE, in her official capacity as Senior  
Technical Advisor of the Technology Engagement  
Team for the Global Engagement Center at the State  
Department;**

**PATRICIA WATTS, in her official capacity as the  
Director of the Technology Engagement Team at the  
Global Engagement Center at the State Department,**

*Defendants.*

**Civil Action No.: 6:23-cv-00609**

**EXHIBIT 1**

# ‘The Decision Was Made’: Texas Bishop Fired By Pope Says He Declined To Resign, Wasn’t Given Reason For Dismissal

available at: [dailywire.com/news/the-decision-was-made-texas-bishop-fired-by-pope-says-he-declined-to-resign-wasnt-given-reason-for-dismissal](https://dailywire.com/news/the-decision-was-made-texas-bishop-fired-by-pope-says-he-declined-to-resign-wasnt-given-reason-for-dismissal)

THE  
**DAILY WIRE**

## — News —

By Bree Dail

Nov 14, 2023 DailyWire.com



Alberto Pizzoli/AFP via Getty Images

VATICAN CITY — On Saturday, news broke that Pope Francis had removed Bishop Joseph Strickland from his position as Bishop of Tyler, Texas, effective immediately and without appeal, according to the announcement from Holy See Press Office.

Considered an outspoken “conservative” in the American church, Strickland has been under fire for recent controversial criticisms of Pope Francis, both on social media and the press, and as a featured guest at several recent controversial conferences. Yet, Bishops in

Germany have been equally outspoken in the press, even defiant in opposition to Pope Francis — not solely on political differences, but Catholic Social and Doctrinal teachings — and seemingly with no response by the Holy See.

Could the disparity be due to a focus of Pope Francis and his advisors on what they consider conservative America's "backward" and "reactionary attitude"?

Less than a month ago, at the opening of his "Synod on Synodality," the Pope decried what he views as the ambitious political machinations and clerical secrecy that has plagued the Catholic Hierarchy, and which he believes has led to distrust of it by the faithful: "When the ministers exceed their service and mistreat the people of God, they disfigure the face of the church with machismo and dictatorial attitudes."

Yet, Saturday's announcement came with no details to the cause for Strickland's forced removal, despite the Pope's repeated promises of a transparent pontificate and words of condemnation of clericalism.

According to media reports, the removal of a Bishop from his diocese has been a rare occurrence, with a total of nine removals over the last three decades — the majority of which have been occurred by order of Pope Francis. Canon Lawyers, who practice the law of the Catholic Church, state that until recently, a forced removal of a Bishop would only take place as a result of serious allegations — "penal privation or deposition of a bishop for a canonical delict or crime."

In the case of Bishop Joseph Strickland, however, very little is known other than claims of an "administrative" removal as the cause for investigation, and conclusions have remained shrouded, leaving the door wide open to reactions and speculation.

In June, it was reported that Pope Francis had issued an Apostolic Visitation (or investigation by representatives of the Holy See) of Strickland and his Diocese. A month prior to this investigation, the now-former Bishop of Tyler had published a post on social media, stating that although he disagreed with those who rejected the authenticity of the pontificate of Pope Francis, he did reject "his program of undermining the Deposit of Faith."

After a “series of days” of “confidential” investigation concluded, in late June, a report was sent back to the Vatican by way of Cardinal Christophe Pierre, the Vatican’s Nuncio to the United States.

On September 11, Catholic outlet The Pillar reported that the Pope had met with Cardinals Pierre and Robert Prevost — the latter being the Prefect for the Dicastery for Bishops — who recommended that the Pope ask for Strickland’s formal resignation. This report, according to Strickland’s responses to media inquiries at the time, came as a complete surprise to him.

“As a basic principle I cannot resign the mandate given to me by Pope Benedict XVI,” he said. “Of course that mandate can be rescinded by Pope Francis, but I cannot voluntarily abandon the flock that I have been given charge of as a successor of the apostles.”

By Nov 9, according to Bishop Strickland, he was told he was to meet with Cardinal Pierre, he explained.

“The Nuncio presented about 4 pages of ‘concerns’ at our meeting but the official letter he provided did not mention any reason to why I was being asked to resign.” Strickland told The Daily Wire.

The bishop also stated that the list of concerns drawn up against him were not provided in writing for his own records, nor was the opportunity to address the concerns or appeal to the Pope. “When I met with the Nuncio on November 9, I told him I couldn’t resign as my own choice but if the Holy Father chose to remove me I would obey.”

Asked if it seemed to him that the Pope’s representative already had a predetermined outcome to this meeting, Strickland stated that when he refused to voluntarily resign, “the Nuncio responded that I would be removed (by the Pope).

“As the Nuncio put it, he was there to deliver a message, but there was no discussion,” Strickland said “The decision was made.”

When asked if he was under any censure, or restrictions of his faculties—and if not, what his role would now be, Strickland responded that he was not informed that he was under any restrictions, and that “Nothing was said explicitly (in the letter) but I presume I am a retired bishop. I have no diocesan jurisdiction but I am able to function with the approval/permission of the local ordinary.”

The Daily Wire contacted Cardinal Christophe Pierre, the Vatican’s Nuncio in charge of the investigation, both by phone and email, with questions regarding the concerns he presented to the Bishop, but received no reply by the time of publishing.

The 65-year-old Strickland was born and raised in rural Texas, and was consecrated a bishop on November 28, 2012, under the pontificate of Pope Benedict XVI.

Early on in his priesthood, he was adverse to the conservative circles he now frequents, telling this reporter in an interview in 2020, “It pains me to say this, but part of my hesitancy I believe in learning how to say the extraordinary form came from my experience of the community who attend ... discord, division, sectarianism, elitism, even spiritual pride. These cannot be from the liturgy — it is fully human, reactionary.”

Yet, throughout the last few years, Strickland appears to have been convinced that an ideological war is being waged amongst the clergy, even at the highest level of the Church, centered around tradition and the right to life.

Strickland’s vocal stances with the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, and viral posts to his nearly 168k followers on X, have made him an immediate lightning rod for critics and provocateurs alike.

When asked by The Daily Wire if he would continue publishing on social media the Bishop responded, “Yes, I intend to continue using the media. I have learned a few things and I hope to use social media more effectively to share the truth of the Gospel.”

Bishop Strickland’s popularity has also led him to attend rallies and conferences over the last year — a lucrative industry, in particular, for Catholic activists and commentators. One such conference took place early this month in the Eternal City, in which the Bishop read aloud a letter from an unnamed friend, stating, in part, that he should not “play nice” while in Rome, and that cowards had been gathered by the “usurper of Peter’s chair.” The video and transcript have since been used as an example supporting the removal of the Bishop.

When asked what his message was to those who oppose him, found themselves scandalized by his removal, or angered by the Pope’s decision, Bishop Joseph Strickland replied, “I’ve encouraged people to take it all to prayer, my hope is that they commit even more deeply to Christ and His Church. Ultimately the Pope and I are successors of the Apostles called to serve Christ’s Church. Christ is the head and we are the body.”

In his announcement on Saturday, Pope Francis assigned Bishop Joe Vàsquez of Austin, Texas, to oversee the Apostolic Administration of the Diocese of Tyler, until a permanent replacement is identified.